

Adolescent Girl

Mysteries of Adolescence



Voluntary Health Association of India

Adolescent Girl

Mysteries of Adolescence

By
DR. AMLA RAMA RAO



Voluntary Health Association of India

FOREWORD

Adolescents in India live in a world of extraordinary dichotomy. The large joint family in which they used to live is gradually crumbling, resulting in the withering away of the support structure that so lovingly groomed them during the crucial phase of growing up. This phase of life is fascinating as well as a daunting process. This is especially true in the case of girls whose world gets curbed, controlled and, at the same time, complex during adolescence. On the other hand, socio-economic demands as well as social progress gradually require them to play a more active and equal role, both at home and outside.

This booklet is meant to be a companion of the adolescent girls to help them to know more about their physical and physiological changes.

The purpose is to clarify the doubt in the minds of the growing children and of their parents and teachers about the changes that take place in the bodies and minds during the period of growth.

The production of this booklet is the result of many steps taken towards allaying the fears, confusion, doubts and anxieties that accompany the various physical and emotional changes in the growing children (adolescents) which, to their minds, act as mysteries.

We hope that this knowledge will equip growing girls to encounter the many taboos that are placed on them, hindering their functioning as productive and equal members of the society.

The booklet has emerged from various workshops held at various places with young girls and boys. The doubts and questions posed by them have enabled us to determine the content. Use of some technical words could not be avoided, inspite of every effort to keep the text simple.

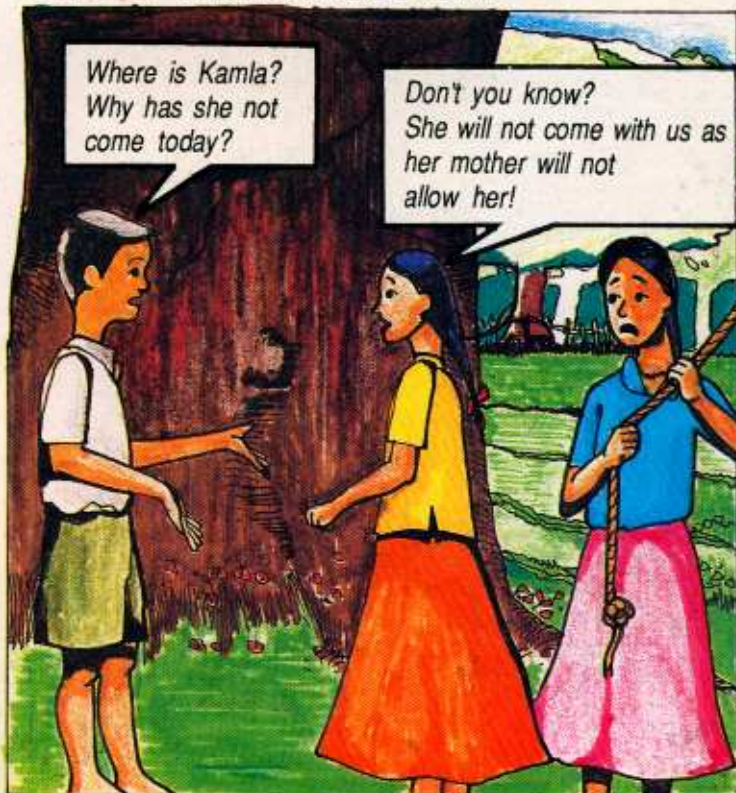
*Like a full-winged bird darting in flight
My hope within surges day and night
To experience the air so rare-
Light and free for me to dare.
Though fetters my youth do bind
I know that "if winter comes
Can spring be far behind"*

RAMESH, RADHA, MOHAN, RAM AND A LOT OF OTHER CHILDREN ARE PLAYING IN THE FIELD.



SUDDENLY RAMESH ASKS RADHA

RAMU - KAMLA'S BROTHER



RADHA LOOKED PUZZLED.

What do you mean
by that ??



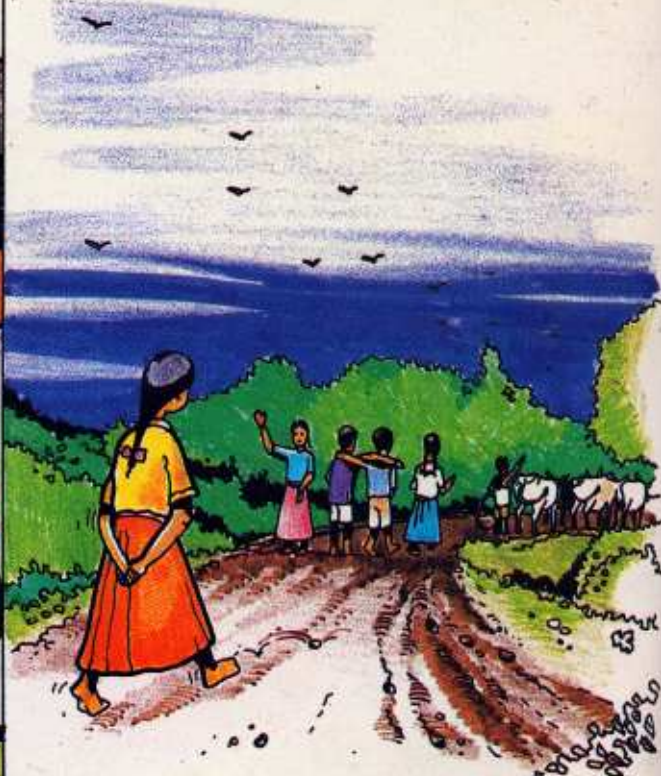
I am much bigger and taller but my
mother thinks I am still a child.



Don't ask me, go ask your mother or
elder sister what they mean by it.



**THE CHILDREN PLAYED AND BY EVENING
THEY TOOK THEIR CATTLE HOME. RADHA
WAS STILL PERTURBED.**



**SHE COULD NOT KEEP
IT TO HERSELF, SO
SHE WENT TO KAMLA.**

Why did you not come
with us today?

I have suddenly become a big girl, as I have
started bleeding. I am told this will be every
month and so I am not allowed to play with
you anymore.

What bleeding?
From where??
And why???
Did you get HURT?

Don't ask me, I know nothing about
it. I only do what I'm told...

... But soon you will also have it.
Then you will keep quiet.

**THIS WAS
SHOCKING NEWS
FOR RADHA...**

... AND BEING WHAT SHE IS,
AGGRESSIVE AND OUTGOING,
THE NEXT DAY SHE WENT
TO THE TEACHER AND
BOMBARDED HER WITH
QUESTIONS THAT WERE
IN HER MIND.



Teacher,
Please explain what Kamla told
me about bleeding.

Why does it
happen to
us?

How does it start?



What is this
bleeding all
about?

Is it only girls
who have it or
even boys when
they grow up?

HER TEACHER TRIED HER BEST TO EVADE THE QUESTIONS.

KAMLA WAS BEING KEPT AT HOME, SULKING. SHE WAS NOT ALLOWED TO MIX WITH OTHER CHILDREN. 4-5 DAYS LATER HER BLEEDING STOPPED.

You are too young to know anything about it. So keep quiet and do your work.

RADHA'S MIND WAS FULL OF ANXIETY. AND SHE BECAME MORE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO KAMLA

UNSATISFIED WITH THE TEACHER'S ANSWER, SHE DECIDES TO GO TO HER ELDER SISTER GEETA

I know. I will go and ask my sister Geeta.

... THOUGH GEETA WAS
HAVING REGULAR BLEEDING
EVERY MONTH FOR THE
LAST 3 YEARS, SHE
ALSO DID NOT
KNOW THE REASON
FOR IT.....

But you must be know-
ing something?

Yes, I get so much pain in my
abdomen, and at times I feel
like vomiting.....

... But I have to bear it. Please do
not bother as I do not know why all
this happens.

Why it happens
to girls only?

RADHA WAS DISTURBED.....

THE NEXT DAY RADHA WAS DETERMINED TO RAISE THESE QUESTIONS WITH THE TEACHER AGAIN. THE TEACHER DID NOT KNOW MUCH BUT SAID : WHEN A GIRL IS TO BECOME A MOTHER, THE BLEEDING STOPS AND SHE KNOWS SHE IS PREGNANT

... RADHA AND KAMLA WERE BOTH SHOCKED

Please teacher, tell us a little more about it, or at least who should we ask about this bleeding and why it happens to girls?

Radha, you seem to be a naughty girl. Why do you need to know all this?

I feel it is nice to know what happens to us and why. How do we take care of ourselves, if we do not understand the reasons for it?
So what is bad about it.





RADHA WAS RATHER SAD, BUT DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. SHE THOUGHT SHE WILL FORGET ABOUT IT. BUT, NO, IN HER MIND SHE WAS NOT HAPPY WITHOUT KNOWING ALL ABOUT HERSELF AND HER BODY.....

READER, IT IS TIME I COME INTO THE SCENE TO CLEAR RADHA'S DOUBTS. I SHALL GO TO HER AS A NURSE.



ONE DAY WHILE PLAYING. . .





Hello !
nurse, Didi



Radha, what is
the matter?

How is your mother?
Do you know you are
going to have
another baby in the
house soon?



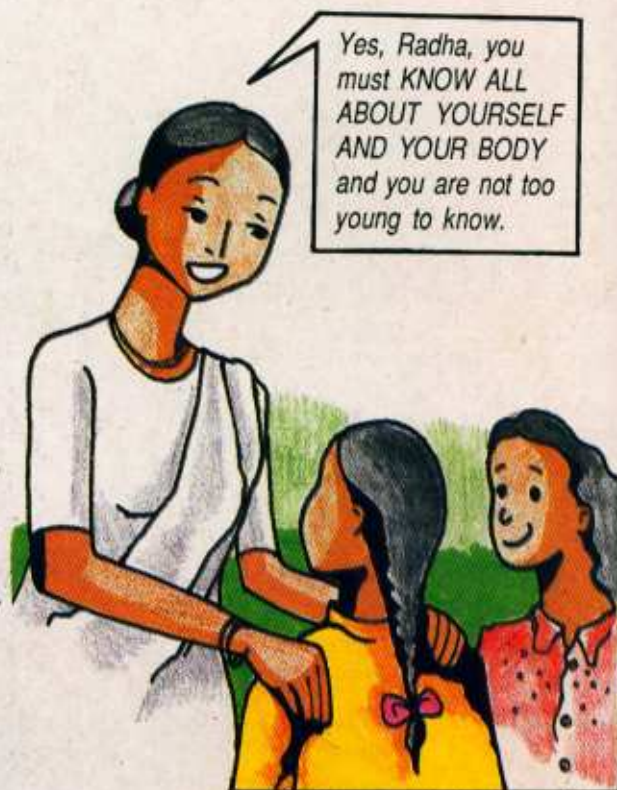
Yes, I am well,
so is mother, she has
gone to the fields, but,

Nurse Didi,
I would like to talk
to you about many
matters.

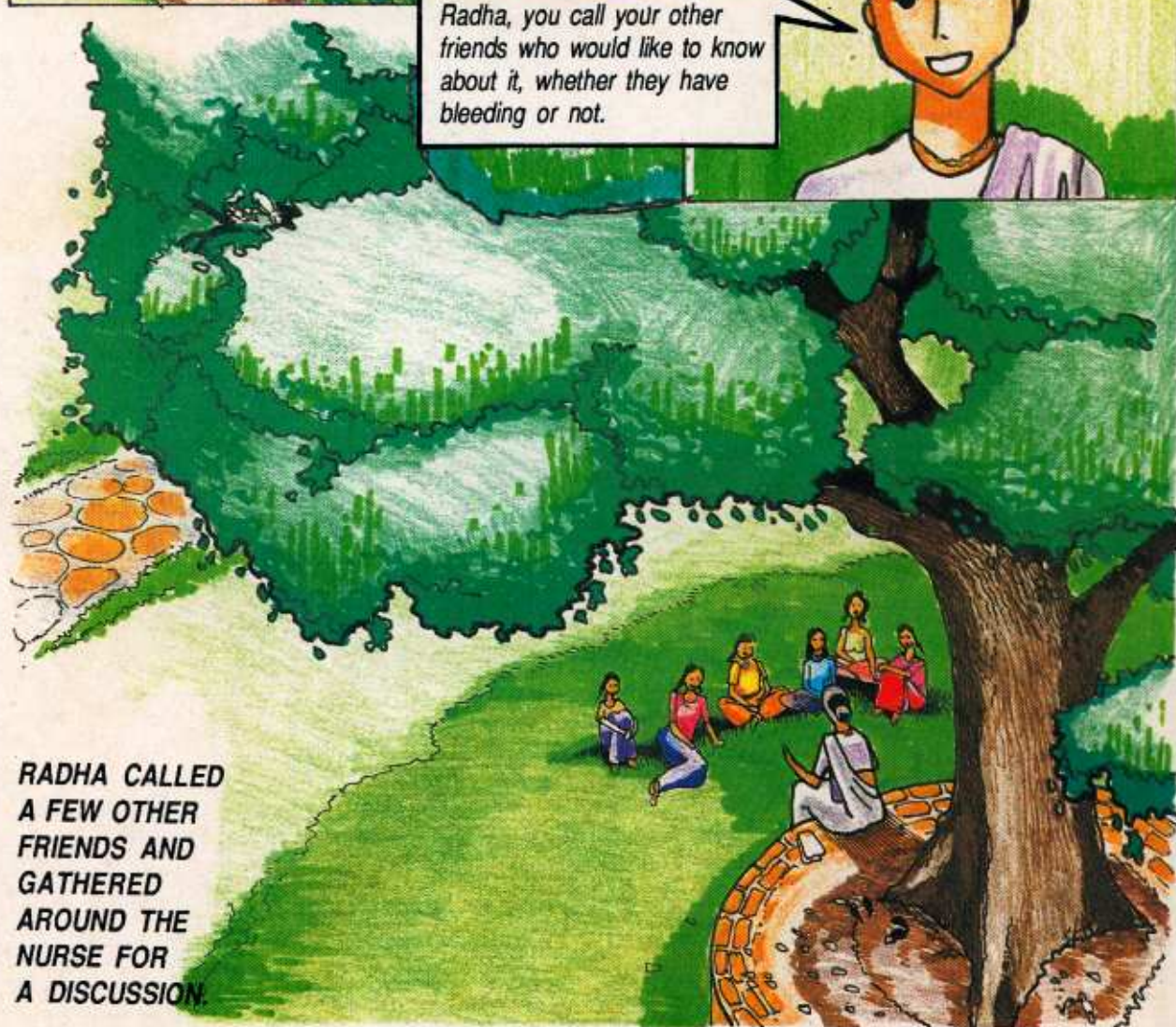


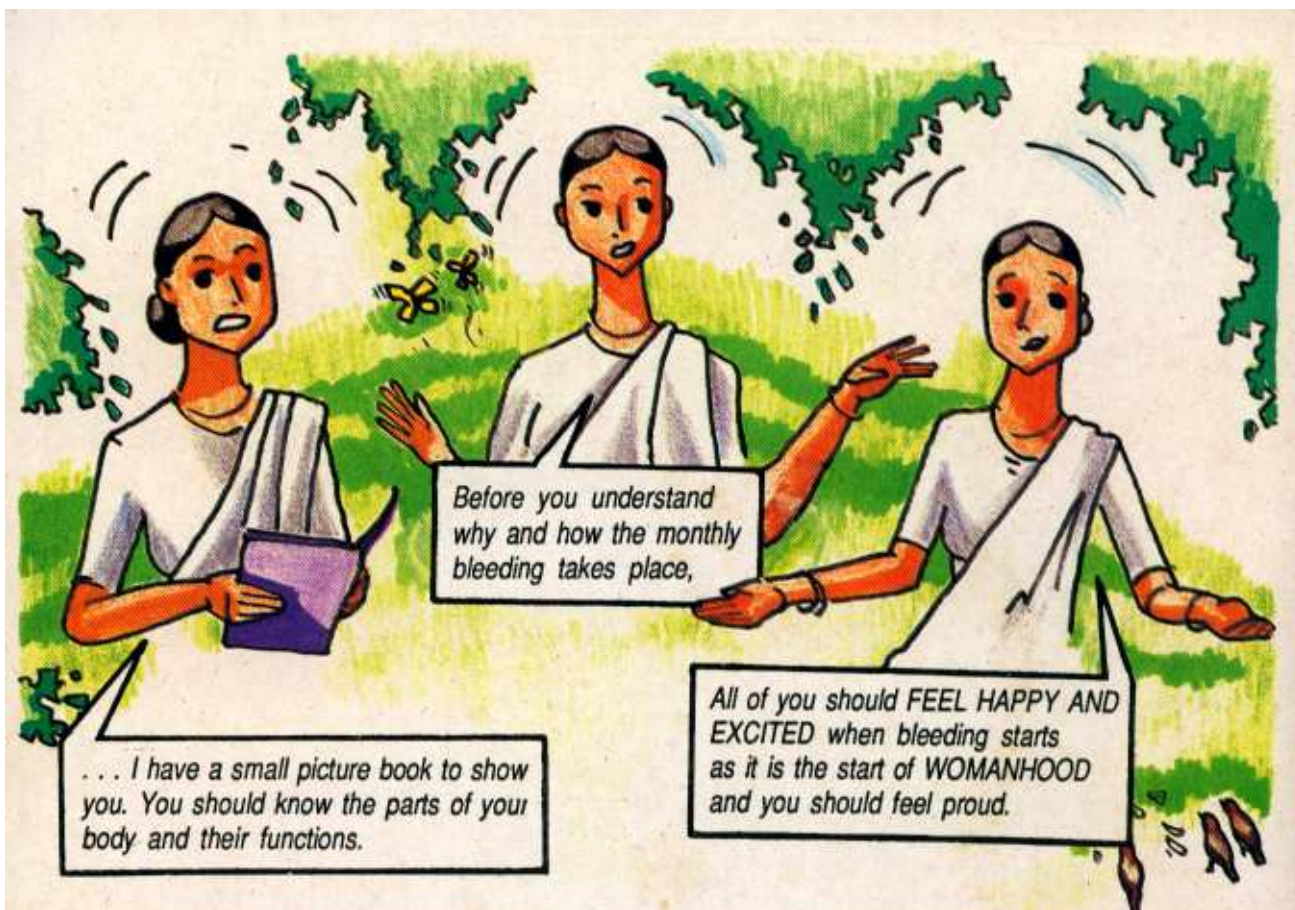
My teacher says
I am too young to know
about myself or things
that happen to girls, but I
would like to know.

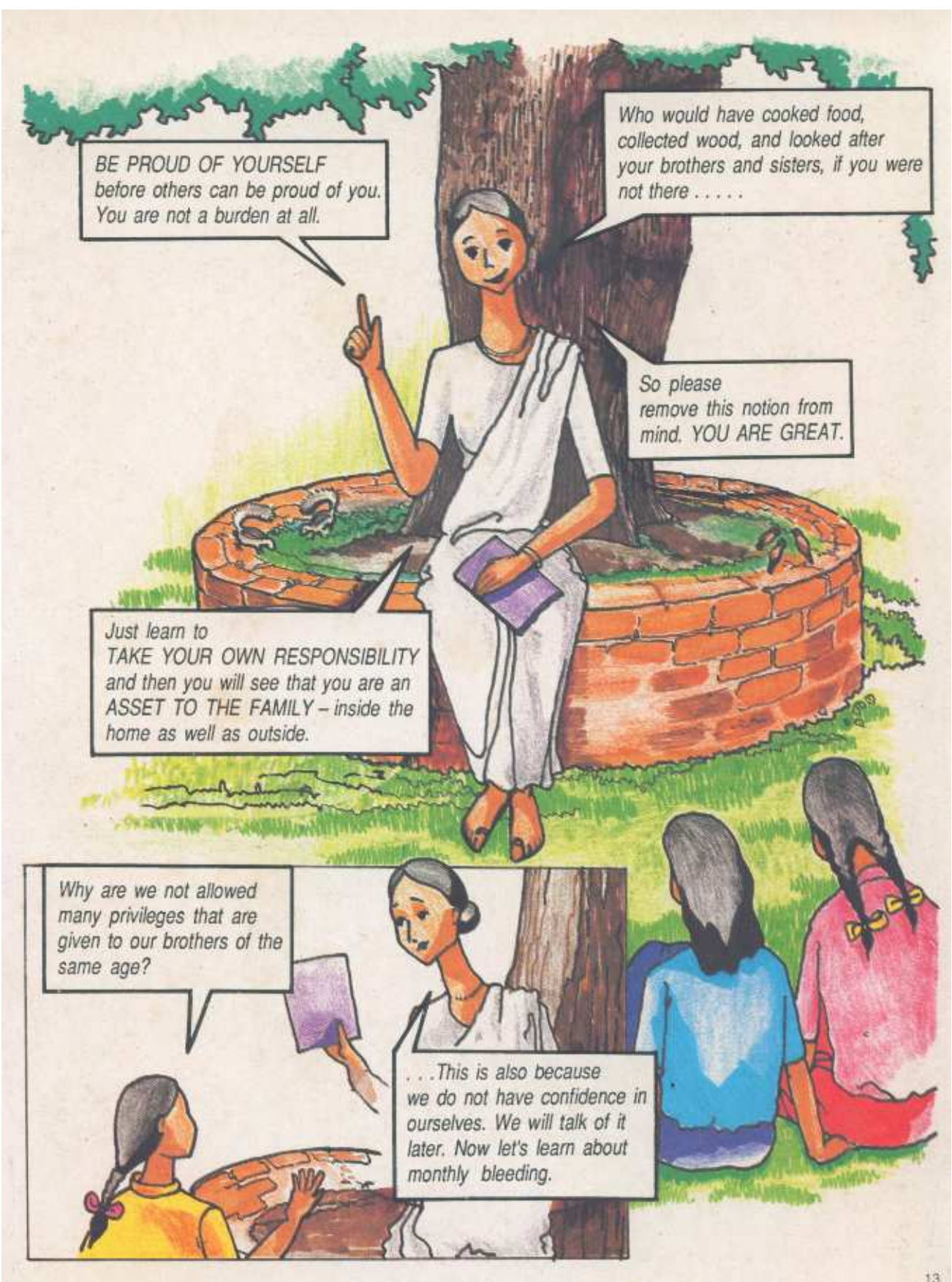
Would you tell me
all about it?



Yes, Radha, you
must **KNOW ALL
ABOUT YOURSELF
AND YOUR BODY**
and you are not too
young to know.







BE PROUD OF YOURSELF
before others can be proud of you.
You are not a burden at all.

Who would have cooked food,
collected wood, and looked after
your brothers and sisters, if you were
not there

So please
remove this notion from
mind. YOU ARE GREAT.

Just learn to
TAKE YOUR OWN RESPONSIBILITY
and then you will see that you are an
ASSET TO THE FAMILY – inside the
home as well as outside.

Why are we not allowed
many privileges that are
given to our brothers of the
same age?

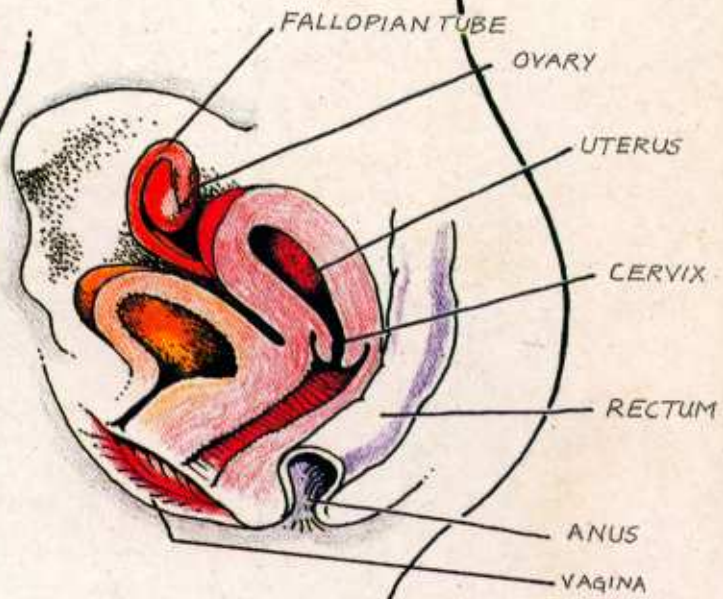
... This is also because
we do not have confidence in
ourselves. We will talk of it
later. Now let's learn about
monthly bleeding.

THE NURSE OPENS THE BOOK...



Bleeding comes from the womb (UTERUS) and passes out from the vagina....

This lasts a few days each month and then stops, and that is why it is called monthly bleeding.



KAMLA ASKS....

After how long does it come again?



The cycle can vary from 21 days to 35 days, the flow of blood can go on from 2 to 8 days.

How much blood is lost due to this every month?
It must be very weakening. My brother got hurt and had bleeding, Mother gave him hot milk with haldi.



Yes you can, it is not an illness, it is a normal phenomenon of growth. Soon you will be a woman.

Can we go out and play during these days?



Each month a girl loses 1/2 to 1 cup of blood. This is quickly replaced with a good diet. But for a weak girl like KAMLA more food is required.

I do not understand how this happens every month and why?



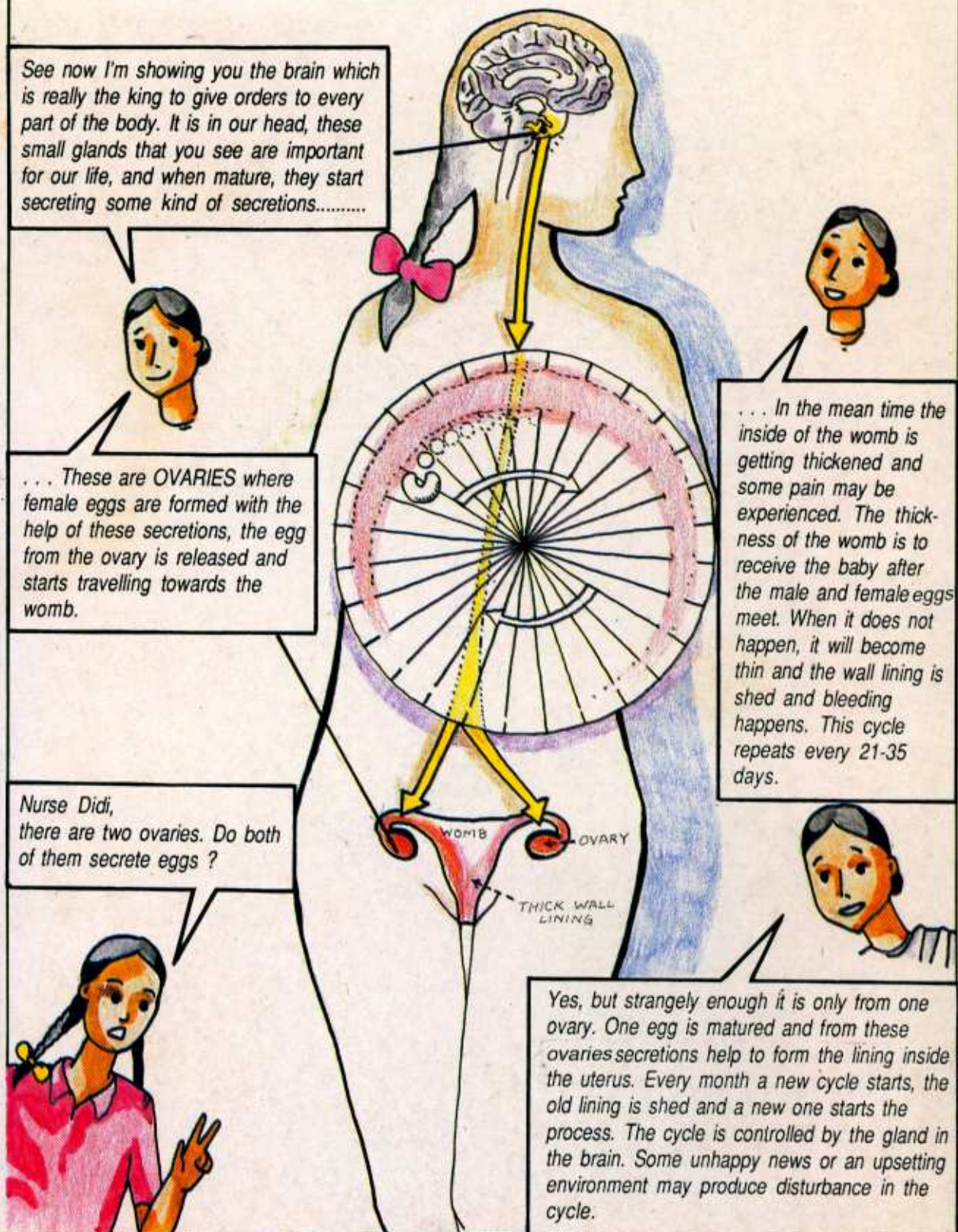
See now I'm showing you the brain which is really the king to give orders to every part of the body. It is in our head, these small glands that you see are important for our life, and when mature, they start secreting some kind of secretions.....

... These are OVARIES where female eggs are formed with the help of these secretions, the egg from the ovary is released and starts travelling towards the womb.

Nurse Didi, there are two ovaries. Do both of them secrete eggs ?

... In the mean time the inside of the womb is getting thickened and some pain may be experienced. The thickness of the womb is to receive the baby after the male and female eggs meet. When it does not happen, it will become thin and the wall lining is shed and bleeding happens. This cycle repeats every 21-35 days.

Yes, but strangely enough it is only from one ovary. One egg is matured and from these ovaries secretions help to form the lining inside the uterus. Every month a new cycle starts, the old lining is shed and a new one starts the process. The cycle is controlled by the gland in the brain. Some unhappy news or an upsetting environment may produce disturbance in the cycle.





When you are unhappy, the mind gets affected and secretions become less. When you are happy, the body functions BEST.



So try and keep yourself as happy as possible, and be grateful to God for what He has given you. Monthly bleeding is NORMAL.

... Next time please tell us about HOW A BABY GETS INTO THE WOMB.

Didi, we have learnt a lot today.



It is a proud and happy feeling of growing into **HEALTHY WOMANHOOD.**

KAMLA LOOKED WORRIED.



Kamla, you look pale?



Now your **GROWING UP PROCESS** has started and will take 4-5 years. You should take good care of yourself. Do not sulk, **EAT YOUR FULL.** Otherwise you will remain weak and small, not able to do any heavy work. **WITHOUT HEALTH NOTHING GIVES HAPPINESS . . .**

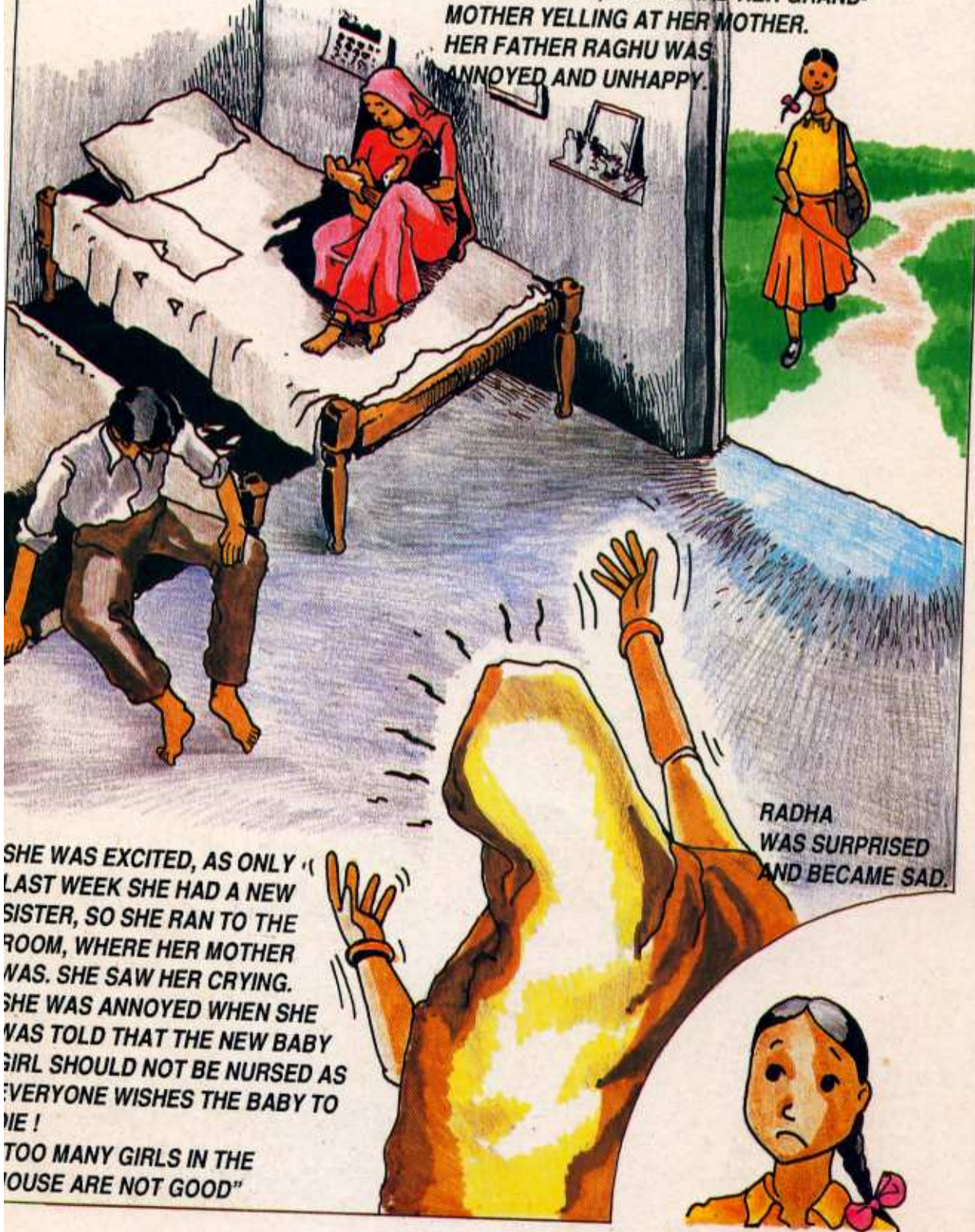


See how much your mother works in the fields as well as in the house. She also bears children, nurses them and educates them. So Kamla you must take care of your body and health.



WEEKS PASSED BY.

ONE DAY WHEN SHE RETURNED HOME FROM SCHOOL, SHE HEARD HER GRAND-MOTHER YELLING AT HER MOTHER. HER FATHER RAGHU WAS ANNOYED AND UNHAPPY.



RADHA WAS SURPRISED AND BECAME SAD.

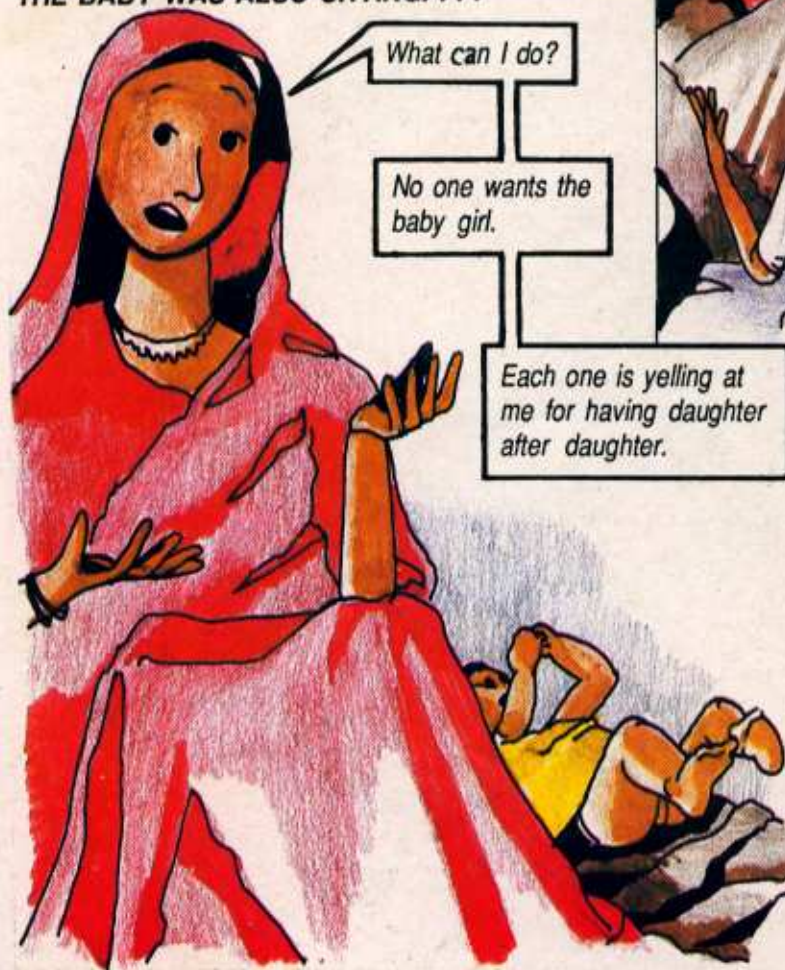
SHE WAS EXCITED, AS ONLY LAST WEEK SHE HAD A NEW SISTER, SO SHE RAN TO THE ROOM, WHERE HER MOTHER WAS. SHE SAW HER CRYING. SHE WAS ANNOYED WHEN SHE WAS TOLD THAT THE NEW BABY GIRL SHOULD NOT BE NURSED AS EVERYONE WISHES THE BABY TO DIE ! TOO MANY GIRLS IN THE HOUSE ARE NOT GOOD"



THE NEXT DAY THE NURSE CAME TO SEE HER MOTHER WHO HAD A LOT OF PAIN IN HER BREAST AND ABDOMEN.



THE BABY WAS ALSO CRYING. . . .



What can I do?

No one wants the baby girl.

Each one is yelling at me for having daughter after daughter.



Shalu what have you done? You have not been feeding the baby! Your breasts are congested. What is the reason?

AMMA, BHABI, RAGHU, please come with me and let us play a game.

Put your hands in this bag and pull out two beads each.

ALL OF THEM DID THIS AND SHOWED IT TO THE NURSE.

THE ONE WHO HAS ONE RED AND ONE GREEN BEAD HAS A MALE BABY, THE ONE WITH TWO REDS HAS A BABY GIRL

See, it is a chance. The boys and girls are not decided before hand. It is like tossing a coin, either you have a head or a tail. You can only decide how many children you want.

That is in your control.

I am unfortunate to have SHALU as my daughter-in-law. She only bears girls.

Actually the father is responsible for the sex of the child. The male has two different types of chromosomes required for sex determination.

THE NURSE OPENS THE BOOK AGAIN



Please explain this to us.

These are very tiny thread like structures known as **CHROMOSOMES**. Each cell has 46 of these tiny threads, 44 of these decide our colour, height and all other body structures, 2 special ones are for **SEX DETERMINATION**.



All girls have the same type of sex chromosomes – (X X)
boys have different types – (X Y)



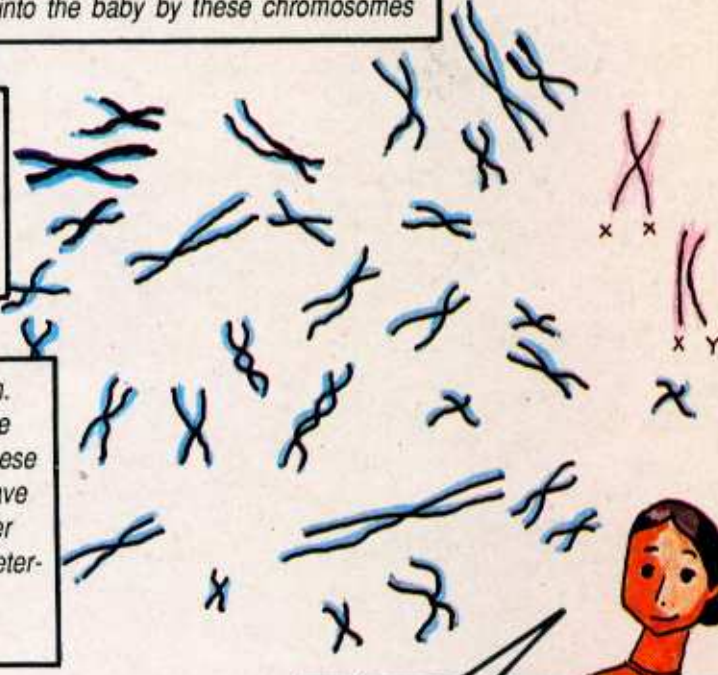
When a **MALE** and a **FEMALE** meet to produce a baby, the character of each parent comes into the baby by these chromosomes

The centre of the cell after meeting has **23 + 23** chromosomes. Suddenly during formation the cell gets divided. One part gets wasted while the other starts forming into a **BABY**.

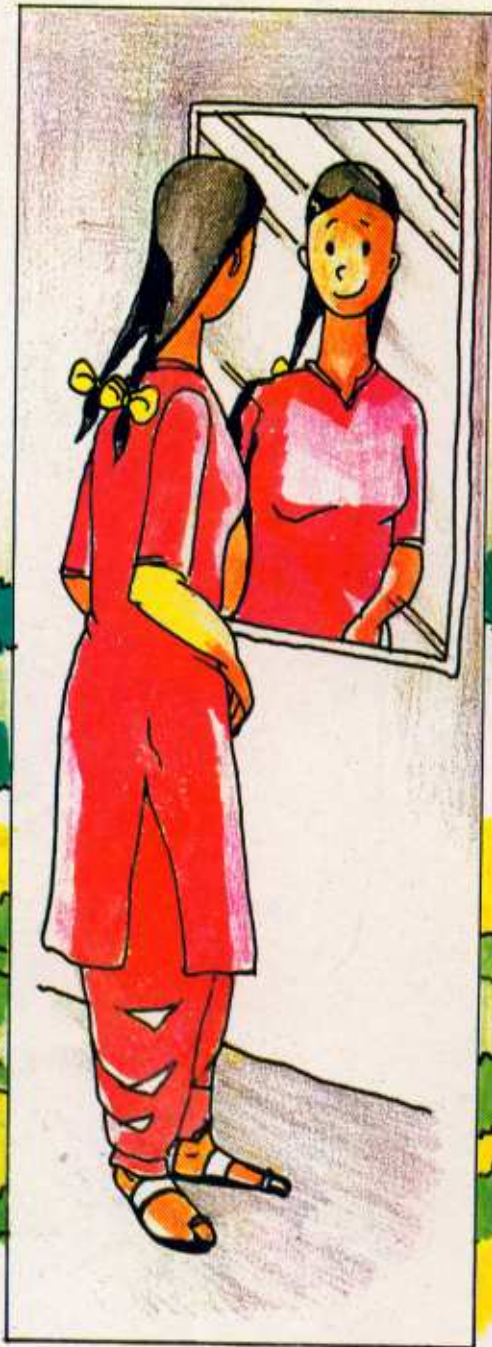
When two **X X** get together a girl is born. When **X Y** get together a baby boy is the result. So you see how important are these tiny thread like structures. Only boys have different types. So it should be the father who is in fact responsible for the sex-determination but having boys or girls is by chance.

There is no medicine, no formula and nothing one can do to alter the sex of the baby. So please stop having argument or getting angry with your daughter-in-law.

Girls are as much better, they love more and do more work for you. Please **SHALU** feed the baby now. In fact daughters take care of old parents more often.



A WEEK OR TWO PASSED BY. KAMLA STARTED COMING OUT BUT SHE RARELY PLAYED WITH THE BOYS ANYMORE. SHE STARTED DEVELOPING BREASTS. AS SUCH SHE FELT A BIT SHY BUT ENJOYED LOOKING AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR. ACTUALLY SHE WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE SELF-CONSCIOUS.



RADHA IS ASSURED LOOKING AT HER AND IS HAPPY. A BIT EXCITED ALSO AS SHE NOW KNOWS THAT SOON SHE WILL ALSO BE A BIG GIRL. BUT SHE WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AND WILL NOT SIT IN THE HOUSE. SHE ALSO KNOWS HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF, DURING THOSE DAYS AND IS LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

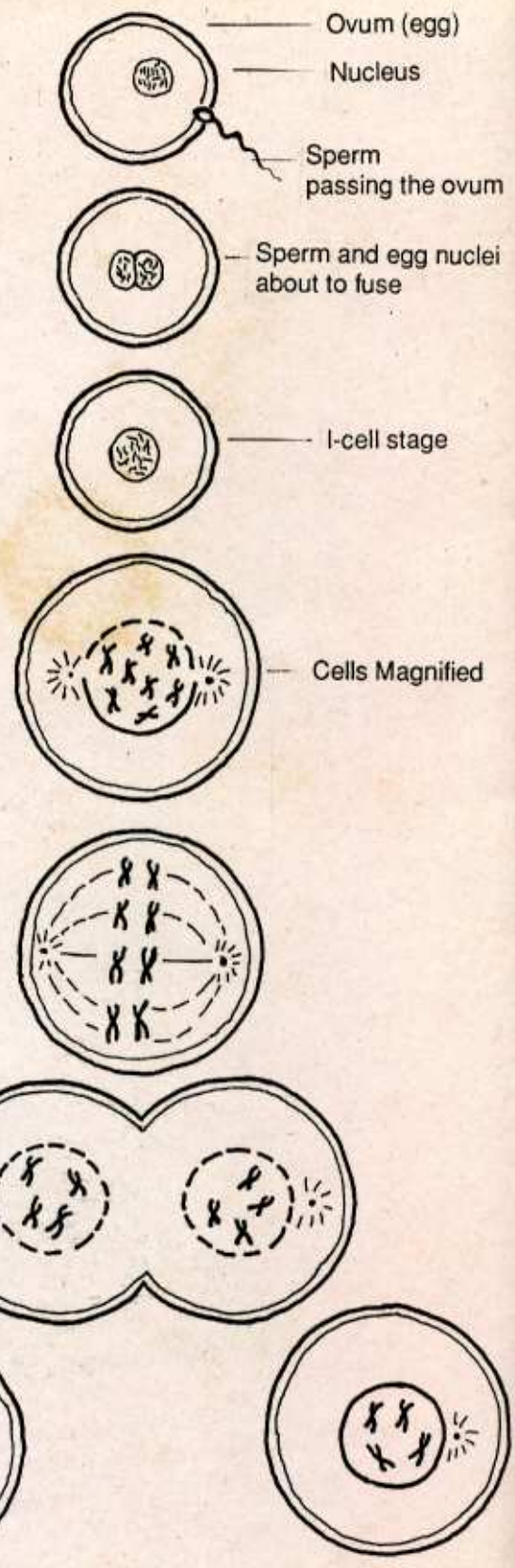
"... So be confident.
Smile, and let the world
smile with you."



CELL DIVISION DURING FERTILIZATION

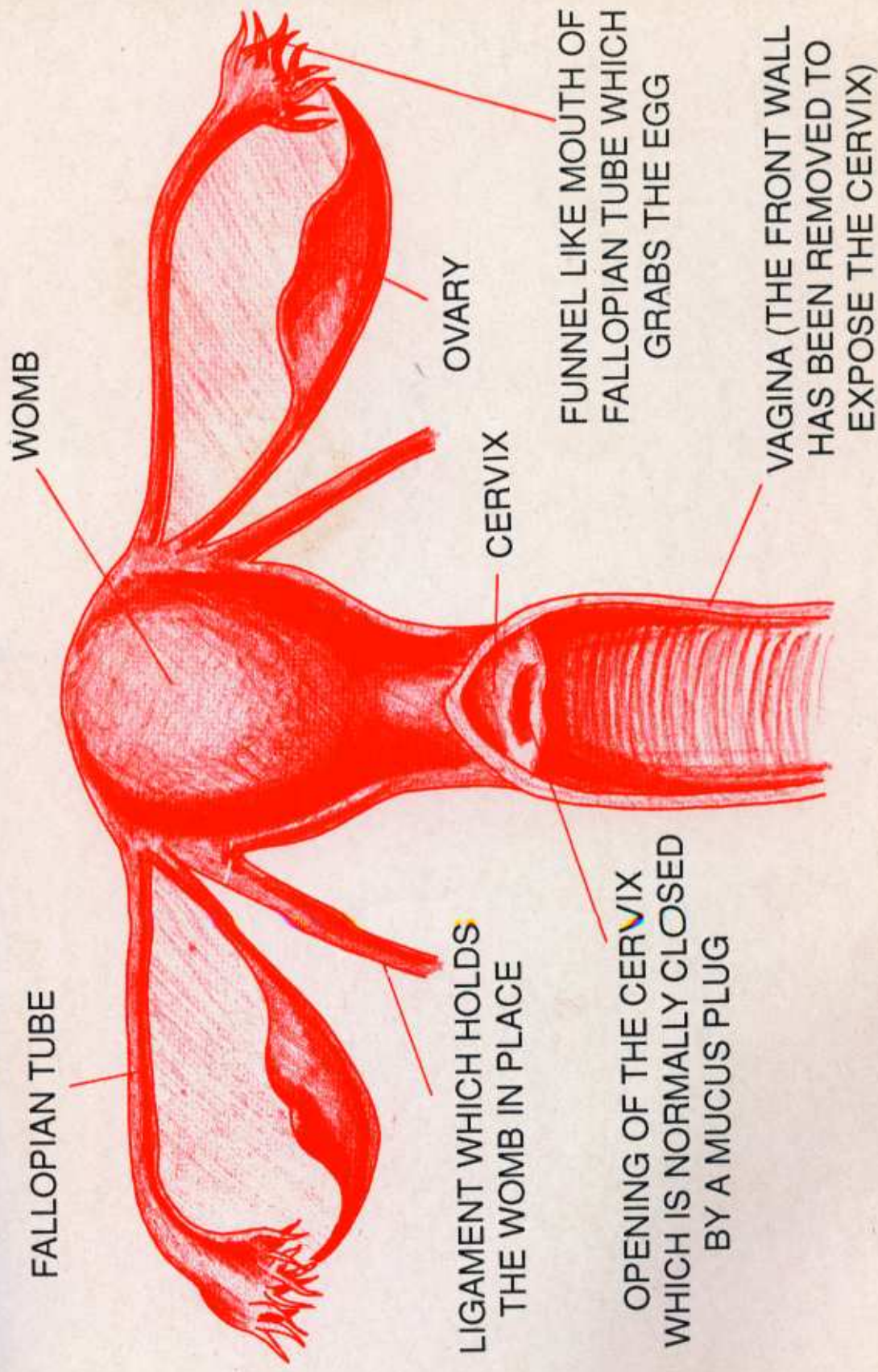
Chromosomes are thread-like structures in the central chamber of each cell. The human body consists of 75 trillion cells. (One Trillion is a thousand million). Each cell has got a central chamber known as nucleus. The chromosomes in the nucleus are responsible for the inherent character like the colour of eyes, hair, shape of nose, and the sex of the body.

Each cell nucleus has 46 chromosomes in it with the exception of the cells of a sperm and one ovum which have only 23 chromosomes. One of them in each has sex chromosomes. When the sperm and the ovum meet, they create an entirely new cell with 46 chromosomes. The cell then begins to divide into two cells, then four cells then eight cells and so on. In doing so at one place the cell will have either XX or XY within the 1st 6 weeks and the sex of the baby is decided.



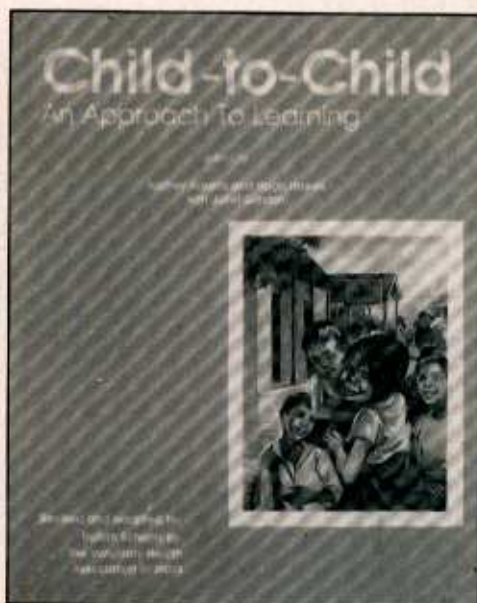
Embryo:
2-cell stage

WOMAN'S REPRODUCTIVE ORGAN



Glossary

<i>Ovum</i>	<i>Female egg is called ovum.</i>
<i>Ovary</i>	<i>An organ inside the body where female eggs are formed.</i>
<i>Uterus</i>	<i>It is the name given to the organ where the baby grows.</i>
<i>Fallopian Tube</i>	<i>These tubes are on both sides of the uterus, through which the ovum or the egg reaches the uterus.</i>



CHILD-TO-CHILD

An approach to learning

(Revised and adapted for Indian schools)

Written in simple, easy to understand language; technical terms have been included only when absolutely necessary; focusses on prevention rather than cure of diseases.

Each chapter contains numerous activities to stimulate the child and is fully illustrated. Annexures contain interesting games that help children learn more about health. This book will be of profound interest to teachers, community health workers, parents and anyone else who cares about the well-being and health of children.

pp 76

Price: Rs. 20.00

AVAILABLE IN HINDI AND ENGLISH AND
ALSO AVAILABLE IN VIDEOCASSETTE
(ENGLISH-Rs. 200)

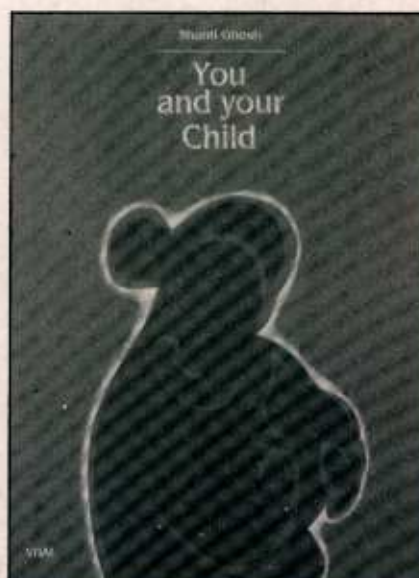
YOU AND YOUR CHILD

(revised edition)

by Dr. Shanti Ghosh

Just what every prospective parent needs a book that guides you through the process of pregnancy, delivery, caring for the new born child, right upto how to cope with childhood diseases and temper tantrums. Written by eminent paediatrician Dr. SHANTI GHOSH, the book is illustrated and contains many charts and tables for added information.

pp 210 Price: Rs. 60.00



CHILD-TO-CHILD Readers

A set of five health readers is being brought out under the Child-to-Child programme. Each book explains simple health concepts and practices in an enjoyable story form and is attractively illustrated in colour. Child-to-Child activities are included in every book.

- * **A Toothy Story:** A reader on dental care that tells children how to avoid cavities through good dental hygiene and proper diet.
- * **Watch Out:** Accidents don't have to happen, but man and his family find this out the hard way...
- * **Clever Saroja:** We can all get diarrhoea or fever any time. What do we do if there is no doctor around? Shanti and Kuku show us.
- * **The Food Fair:** The local school is holding its annual fair. Sita's group wants to win the prize. How do they do it? Read all about it in The Food Fair.
- * **Attack:** Did you know that every day we are attacked by little creatures called worms and germs? How do we defend ourselves from them? Find out all about it in this book.



Price: Rs.25 per set of 5 book



Better Care at Birth

A book for all those interested in the better *care of mothers and children, especially* for those who teach parents and relatives. It can be used in homes, health centres, mahila mandals.

It can be used in conjunction with "Better Child Care".

Price : Rs. 12